



# OSAC Country Security Report Thailand

Published: March 14, 2025

*This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Thailand Travel Advisory and [Thailand Country Information Page](#).*

## Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

### U.S. Embassy Bangkok

120 - 122 Wireless Road and 95 Wireless Road, Bangkok

Phone +66 (02) 205-4000

Marine Post One: +66 (02) 205-4108. Hours: Monday through Friday, 0700-1600.

### U.S. Consulate General Chiang Mai

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## OSAC Country Chapters

The Thailand OSAC Country Chapter and the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) are located in Bangkok.

Contact [OSAC's Asia team](#) with any questions.

## Thailand Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication indicates that travelers should exercise normal precautions in Thailand. Reconsider travel to Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, and Songkhla provinces due to civil unrest associated with ongoing insurgent activities.

Periodic violence directed mostly at Thai government interests by a domestic insurgency continues to affect security in the southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, and Songkhla. In Songkhla, the insurgency is most active in the districts of Chana, Thepha, Nathawat, and Saba Yoi. U.S. citizens are at risk of death or injury due to the possibility of indiscriminate attacks in public places.

The U.S. government has limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in these provinces as U.S. government employees must obtain special authorization to travel to these provinces.

## Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bangkok and Chiang Mai as being **LOW**-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Crime “C” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Thailand.

The crime emergency line in Thailand is **191**.

Most criminal activity is limited to non-confrontational street crime and crimes of opportunity, including purse snatching, pickpocketing, petty theft, jewelry schemes, and tourism fraud. Violent crime (e.g., murder, rape, and assault) targeting foreigners is relatively rare; however, murders, rapes, and assaults against foreigners do occur. When it does occur, such crime typically happens at night, often when victims have been drinking or separated from their companions.

There are numerous international and indigenous organized crime elements present in Thailand, primarily concentrated in major cities. Their activities include drug trafficking, human trafficking, prostitution, document fraud, and counterfeiting. The Embassy is unaware of any U.S. private-sector organizations that have experienced problems directly associated with organized crime.

The safety and security of guest rooms in quality hotels is adequate. There have been isolated instances of domestic workers stealing cash or other valuables from their employers in private residences.

The risk of credit/debit card fraud and identity fraud is relatively high. There have been instances in which international criminal organizations based in Malaysia, Ukraine, Russia, and elsewhere have installed sophisticated skimming devices on ATMs to steal cardholder information and subsequently withdraw money from accounts.

When traveling alone, exercise caution, stay near other travelers, and ensure friends or family know how to contact you. Taxi and “tuk-tuk” drivers may attempt to charge excessive fares or refuse passengers. You should either request the driver use the meter or agree on the fare beforehand. At the airport, use only public transportation from the airport’s official pick-up area, cars from the limousine counters, or a car from your hotel. Rental scams do occur in Thailand. Many rental motorbike, jet ski, and car companies will hold your passport until you pay for real or fictitious damages. Using a passport as collateral is not advised.

Exorbitant bar tab scams occur in Thailand. Some bars and entertainment venues will charge exorbitant prices for drinks or unadvertised cover charges and threaten violence if you don’t pay. Other scams involving gems, city tours, entertainment venues, and credit cards are common, especially in tourist areas.

Conditions in immigration detention centers (IDCs) where authorities detain foreign nationals who violate immigration laws remain poor and most are overcrowded. IDCs, administered by the Immigration Police Bureau, which reports to the Royal Thai Police (RTP), are not subject to many of the regulations that govern the regular prison system. U.S. citizen detainees often complain of stark, austere living conditions, overcrowding, and unhealthy conditions. Personal security is poor. In addition, the main IDC in Bangkok does not dependably provide adequate medical or mental health care. In 2019, two U.S. citizens died while in custody at the Bangkok IDC. Deportations are self-funded and it may take up to two weeks for Thai authorities to process a case before deportation. Detainees must have funds to purchase a phone card and do not have access to the internet. Prior approval and a security escort are required to visit a Western Union or an ATM machine.

Many travelers have had passports, wallets, and other valuables stolen in Bangkok's Chatuchak Weekend Market, on Khao San Road, and at other crowded areas. Pickpockets and thieves often cut into purses and bags with a razor to remove items surreptitiously. There have been incidents involving drive-by snatch-and-grab robberies from thieves on motorcycles. Travelers on long-distance bus routes may be susceptible to theft as well.

These crimes are most common in Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and in tourist areas in southern Thailand, including Phuket, Koh Samui, Koh Pha Ngan, and Krabi.

Sexually motivated violence, committed by either Thai citizens or foreigners, is most likely to occur after time spent at bars, clubs, and parties, on beaches, or in remote/isolated areas. There have been reports of criminals using scopolamine or other date rape drugs to spike drinks and sexually assault and/or rob their victims. U.S. citizens have reported robberies after soliciting commercial sex workers. The Thai police response will differ from an investigation in the United States; investigating officials have publicly discredited people who have reported being the victim of crimes. In addition to making a report at the police jurisdiction in which the crime occurred, we advise contacting the Embassy and engaging a local attorney if you are a victim of an assault.

Periodic violence directed mostly at Thai government interests by a domestic insurgency continues to affect security in the southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, and Songkhla. U.S. citizens are at risk of death or injury due to the possibility of indiscriminate attacks in public places. Martial law is in force in this region. The U.S. government has limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in these provinces. Travel to this region by U.S. government employees must be reviewed and approved in advance.

### Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping "K" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Thailand.

## Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bangkok and Chiang Mai as being **MEDIUM**-threat locations for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Thailand.

Terrorist groups and those inspired by such organizations are intent on attacking U.S. citizens abroad. Terrorists are increasingly using less sophisticated methods of attack – including knives, firearms, and vehicles – to more effectively target crowds. Frequently, their aim is unprotected or vulnerable targets, such as high-profile public events (sporting contests, political rallies, demonstrations, holiday events, celebratory gatherings, etc.); hotels, clubs, and restaurants frequented by tourists; places of worship; schools; parks; shopping malls and markets; and public transportation systems (including subways, buses, trains, and scheduled commercial flights).

The U.S. Department of State assesses there is a continued risk of terrorism in Southeast Asia, including in Thailand.

Defer non-emergency travel to Thailand's southernmost provinces of Songkhla, Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. These provinces frequently experience criminally and politically motivated violence in the form of drive-by shootings, ambushes, and small bomb attacks. In 2021, 318 violent incidents were reported in the Deep South provinces and, of the incidents, 47% were shootings, 23% were bombings, and 7% were suspicious corpse discoveries, leaving 23% as other types of violent crimes. As result of these incidents, 181 casualties were reported with 137 deaths.

Since 2004, incidents have included arson attacks directed at schools and buildings associated with the government; bombings in public areas and near local government offices; the killing of police officers and other officials, including civilians suspected of cooperating with authorities; and the theft of weapons and explosives. Attacks have increasingly targeted commercial areas where foreigners might congregate. Authorities have instituted special security measures, such as curfews, military patrols, and random searches of train passengers in the affected areas. Those wishing to travel to border areas should check with Thai Tourist Police and review the most up-to-date travel advisories.

Thailand has also experienced limited violent incursions along the Burma and Cambodia borders. Heavily armed drug smugglers have had deadly clashes with police near the border with Burma.

Transnational terrorist elements, which visit and transit Thailand with relative ease, could easily exploit soft-target vulnerabilities. There is a higher risk of attack associated with places where foreigners congregate, including clubs, restaurants, residential areas, places of worship, hotels, schools, business offices, outdoor recreational events, resorts, and beaches.

## Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bangkok as being a **MEDIUM**-threat location and Chiang Mai as being a **LOW**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Thailand, indicating that demonstrations, protests, and strikes occur frequently, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability for adequate response. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notification, often interrupting logistics and services; even demonstrations planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

## Elections/Political Stability

In Thailand, the King is the Head of Government and the Lèse Majesté law preclude individuals from publicly criticizing the ruling government and monarchy. In 2019, Thailand returned to an elected government after five years of military rule under the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). As part of the return to elected government, the government lifted many NCPO-era restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, opening the door to peaceful public protest for the first time in five years. However, in 2020, numerous sizeable political protests erupted with anti-government and anti-monarchy groups criticizing Thailand’s current system of government. The protests continued into 2021, when authorities began to detain and arrest the organizers. By 2022, street demonstrations largely died down due to government suppression and internal divisions with the protest movement, although small-scale and online activism continued.

Thailand held a general election in May 2023. Thailand’s new government, led by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin of the Pheu Thai Party, took office in September. In August 2024, the country’s Constitutional Court removed Srettha over an ethical violation. Thailand’s House of Representatives then elected Paetongtarn Shinawatra as prime minister.

## Protests & Demonstrations

In 2020-21, Bangkok experienced hundreds of demonstrations associated with anti-government protests. The size of the demonstrations ranged from hundreds to 40,000 participants. As the number of demonstrations grew, so did reports of violence. Similar protests occurred sporadically across Thailand.

Violence reported during the protests involved police action to disperse the protest, police deployment of a water cannons, clashes between protest groups, clashes between protestors and the police, small explosions, and reports of gunshots.

If a protest or demonstration is expected to pass near the U.S. Embassy or Consulate facilities, Embassy and Consulate entrances and functions may be restricted.

## Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

There is no significant anti-U.S. or anti-Western sentiment in Thailand.

## Law Enforcement

Thailand has several tourist courts to deal with petty crime and complaints involving foreigners.

The Royal Thai Police and the Department of Special Investigations actively investigate organized crime syndicates, but due to corruption, resource limitations, and bureaucratic inefficiency, arrest rates are extremely low; prosecution rates are even lower.

The Royal Thai Police and the Royal Thai Armed Forces share responsibility for law enforcement and the maintenance of order within the country. The police report to the Office of the Prime Minister; the armed forces report to the Defense Ministry. The Border Patrol Police have special authority and responsibility in border areas to combat insurgent movements.

Authorities took some steps to investigate and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses. Official impunity, however, continued to be a problem.

## Police Response

Police response is generally better in larger cities than in smaller towns and provinces. A lack of funding, inadequate training, and corruption hamper police effectiveness and the ability to conduct follow-up criminal investigations, as do frequent rotations that prevent them from operating with the effectiveness or professionalism one typically associates with a modern police force.

Police officers outside major tourist destinations frequently do not speak English. Tourist Police, stationed in popular tourist areas, generally speak English, and many English-speaking volunteers in Bangkok assist the Tourist Police with translation. Tourist Police are generally helpful in assisting tourists. Several Tourist Courts deal with petty crime and complaints involving foreigners.

In the event of police detention or harassment, remain calm and ask for an English-speaking officer. Since Thailand is not a signatory to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, the U.S. Embassy and Consulate may not learn of the arrest of U.S. citizens until several days after the incident. U.S. citizens detained or arrested in Thailand should ask authorities to contact the American Citizen Services (ACS) section at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok or Consulate in Chiang Mai. Consular officers can help arrested U.S. citizens understand the local criminal justice process and find an attorney (if needed).

## Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Thailand, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

## Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Thailand.

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials; the government generally did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption during 2023. Petty corruption and bribe taking are widespread among police.

Senior government officials were implicated in corruption investigations during 2023, which exposed further corruption at the national and local levels.

Financial disclosure law and regulations require elected and appointed public officials to disclose assets and income publicly according to standardized forms. The law penalizes officials who fail to submit declarations, submit inaccurate declarations, or conceal assets. Penalties include a five-year political activity ban, asset seizure, and discharge from position, as well as a maximum imprisonment of six months, a nominal fine, or both.

The Deep South emergency decree, which gave the government authority to detain persons without charge for a maximum of 30 days in unofficial places of detention, remained in effect.

## Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity experts report detecting more than twenty million internet-borne cyberthreats on computers in Thailand in 2020; according to one source, cyberattacks have more than doubled since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than one-quarter of Thai users are at risk of infection from online threats. Data also showed 2.7 million cyberthreat detections on consumer products and 856,000 detections on corporate products in Thailand.

Thailand's cybersecurity readiness came under question in 2021, after reports that tourists' personal details were exposed online. The 200-gigabyte database information containing the full name, sex, passport number, residency status, visa type, Thai arrival card number, and date

of arrival in Thailand of approximately 106 million visitors from 2011 to 2021 was public for at least several days.

Internet romance and financial scams are prevalent in Thailand. Scams are often initiated through Internet postings/profiles or by unsolicited emails and letters. Scammers almost always pose as U.S. citizens who have no one else to turn to for help. Common scams include romance/online dating, money transfers, grandparent/relative targeting, free trip/luggage claims, and work permits/job offers.

## Import/Export Restrictions

Thailand requires special permission for the export of some religious items, as well as some antiques. Permits may be required for transport of these items, if allowed.

Customs may enforce strict regulations on Buddha images, firearms, bullets and/or bullet casings, bullet-proof vests, night vision devices and other para-military type equipment, explosives, drugs, radios, books, and recordings, which might be cultural property and/or considered harmful to the public interest.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

*Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).*